CLAIMS

WE CLAIM AS OUR INVENTION:

1. A method of improving gaseous flow within a lung having chronic obstructive pulmonary disease comprising placing an implant in an airway of the lung to allow expired air to pass out of the lung tissue.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising locating at least one region within a portion of a natural airway of the respiratory system for altering gaseous flow.

3. The method of claim 2, comprising creating at least one channel at a site in the region.

4. The method of claim 3, comprising locating a region for altering gaseous flow prior to the step of locating.

5. The method of claim 3, wherein the locating step includes examining the lung using an imaging method selected from radiography, computer tomography, ultrasound, Doppler, and acoustic imaging to determine a location to alter the gaseous flow.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising delivering drugs to the airway.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of delivering steroids to the lung.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the conduit is comprised of a material selected from the group consisting of elastomers, polymers, metals, metal alloys, shape memory alloys, and shape memory polymers.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the conduit is removable from the body.

10. The method of claim 1, comprising creating at least one channel within the lung.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the conduit is adapted to maintain the patency of the natural airway during constriction of the airway.